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SUBJECT: UNGA: REPORT ON AFRICAN DELEGATIONS AT THE 63RD  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

REF: USUN 1193 07

Classified By: Minister-Counselor Jeffrey DeLaurentis for reasons 1.4 (D)

11. (U) Gerald Scott is again serving as Senior Advisor for Africa at USUN during the regular session of the General Assembly. These are his personal reflections on African participation as the regular session draws to a close. (Note that while in the UN context the African Group includes the states of the North African littoral, usage of the term in this cable reflects Ambassador Scott's portfolio which deals only with the delegations of the AU members falling within the purview of State's Bureau of African Affairs.)

#### SUMMARY

2.(SBU) This General Assesmbly has been less charged than usual. There were no major battles over Security Council seats or contested elections to important bodies in which we had a candidate. The AF Missions have retained their reputation for group solidarity, but it is perhaps slightly less pronounced than formerly. While support for our country-specific human rights resolutions was a bit weaker, we gained slightly in the anti-Israeli votes and in other issues of importance to the U.S.

#### THE GENERAL DEBATE

13. (U) The GA begins with a General Debate, addresses mostly by Chiefs of State and Heads of Government setting out an over-all view of the challenges that face the world. This year the themes most often voiced were the global financial problem, the food and energy crises, and the need to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Africans joined others in calling for UN reform, particularly Security Council reform, which in the African context means a reiteration of the Ezulwini Consensus calling for two permanent UNSC seats with veto, and five non-permanent seats (though some admitted in private that this is a formula open to negotiation). Some speakers praised the US: Comoros, Cameroon (as a witness of the Greentree Agreements dealing with the resolution of the dispute with Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula), Zambia (for AIDS relief), Togo, Botswana.

14. (U) Some speakers criticized the US by name. Re our Cuban policy: Lesotho, Angola, Sao Tome and Namibia (mentioned in 5 of the last 6 General Debates). Zimbabwe's President Mugabe vehemently attacked the US and UK "themselves international perpetrators of genocide, acts of aggression and mass destruction. The masses of innocent men, women and children who have perished by their thousands in

Iraq surely demand retribution and vengeance. Who shall heed their cry? Surely those who invaded Iraq under false pretences and on the strength of contrived lies and in blatant violation of the Charter and international law must be made liable for them!" The Foreign Minister of Eritrea devoted his speech almost entirely to the Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary dispute and other points of conflict in the Horn of Africa. It was perhaps the most anti-American speech of the General Debate. "These multi-faceted problems are, of course, rooted in multiple causes. At the same time, it cannot be denied that many of them have been exacerbated, if not instigated, by the misguided and domineering policies of the US Government. Indeed, the fingerprints of the sole super-power are discernible in most of the conflict situations that are raging in many parts of our globe with the deleterious economic, financial and humanitarian ramifications that they invariably entail." And re Somalia: "a pre-emptive invasion by Ethiopia under the instigation of the United States to produce the largest humanitarian tragedy that dwarfs other contemporary crises in Africa."

15. (SBU) I note that the usages of diplomacy, especially in the UN context, weigh so heavily against direct public criticism of a friendly government, that I believe we ought to note and take exception to any speech in which we are the only government singled out for objection.

#### UN SECURITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

16. (SBU) New Security Council members were elected by the General Assembly in October. Uganda, which had the endorsement of its regional group, was elected with 181 votes

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to replace South Africa in January. Burkina Faso remains on the Council for another year. Togo and Nigeria are both expected to vie for the Burkina Faso seat in the next General Assembly. Countries on the Council gain a certain weight because of their presence there. Uganda will, therefore, play a somewhat greater role in Africa Group matters; South Africa perhaps a bit less. Uganda will certainly receive much more high-level US Mission attention than is now the case.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS TEXTS IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

17. (C) Every year we co-sponsor country-specific resolutions criticizing human rights violations in a small number of countries, this year only three of them: DPRK, Burma and Iran. Four years ago we co-sponsored a resolution on Sudan, and five years ago on Sudan and Zimbabwe, but there were no African targets this year to excite the opposition of the members of the AU to our efforts. Even so, the effort was, as always, a difficult one for most African delegations. The usual arguments were deployed: now that we have a "reformed" Human Rights Council in Geneva, that is the proper venue for such resolutions; the selection of target countries is "political," since other equally or worse violators escape such censure. Behind these arguments are the realities of the influence of the OIC and Arab group: Missions know that if they offend against those interests, their hope for support when they have an issue or a candidate for a UN position will be much reduced. Finally, as more than one Ambassador has admitted to me over the years, Africans know that in many cases they are "one coup away" from serious human rights charges against the governments they represent.

18. (SBU) More difficult than the passage of the texts themselves is the defeating of motions to adjourn debate, so called "no-action motions," which are a procedural move to sweep the draft text off the agenda. Here, the argument is perhaps not that the country in question is not deserving of censure, but that for various reasons, this is not the time and the place -- the argument in favor of Geneva as the sole venue is especially deployed in this case. We have historically been able to get our country-specific

resolutions adopted if we can get past the no-action motion.

9.(U) As of the writing of this cable, the Third Committee human rights texts have not come before Plenary. However the votes in Third Committee are as follows:

Democratic Republic of Korea: There was no motion to adjourn debate. The resolution passed 95(US)-24-62. The AF vote was 10-5-27 and six absent. This is slightly worse than last year's Plenary vote of 11-4-27-6. Those voting YES with the US: Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Togo, Tanzania. Those voting NO were Guinea, Namibia (which announced that it meant to abstain), Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe. Those abstaining were Angola, Benin, B. Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, CAR, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Eq. Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, G. Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, S. Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia. The remaining 6 AF countries did not vote.

Burma: There was a motion to adjourn debate which failed: 54-90(US)-34. The AF vote was 12-6-20-10, notably better than last year in Plenary, which was 17-6-16-9. Those voting YES against the US position: Angola, CAR, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Namibia, S.Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Those voting NO with the US: Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Congo, Liberia, Mauritius. Those abstaining: Benin, B. Faso, Cameroon, E.Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, G. Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania. The remaining 10 AF countries did not vote.

The Burma resolution passed 89(US)-29-63. The AF vote was 5-6-31-6. This is a little worse than last year: 7-2-22-17. Those voting YES with the US position: Botswana, Burundi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Togo. Those voting NO: Cote d'Ivoire, Namibia, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe (However, Namibia and Niger announced after the vote that they had meant to abstain.) Those abstaining: Angola, Benin, B. Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, CAR, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Eq. Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, G. Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique,

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Rwanda, Sao Tome, Senegal, S.Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia. The remaining 6 AF countries did not vote.

Iran: The Resolution on the "Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran" is considered by us to be the most important issue in this year's GA. We argued for the resolution, not only on the grounds of Iran's human rights record, but also on the grounds of the general strategic situation in which the vote is taking place: to give Iran a victory this year after an equivalent resolution has been passed by the GA for 21 years (with a few exceptions, every year since 1985) would provide a government thwarting the international community on Nuclear and other issues a domestic argument that would be clearly damaging to our efforts to bring them to a more responsible position. The motion to adjourn debate failed 71-81(US)-28. This was a satisfying margin: last year in Third Committee the motion failed by the narrowest of votes: 78-79-24. The AF vote in Third Committee this year was 24-4-14-6, perhaps very slightly worse than the equivalent vote last year in Plenary of 27-6-9-6. Those voting YES against the US position: Angola, CAR, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, G. Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Sao Tome, Senegal, Somalia, S.Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Those voting NO with the US: Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Liberia. Those abstaining: Benin, B.Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Eq. Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania. The remaining 6 did not vote.

The vote on the draft resolution: 70(US)-51-60. The AF vote was 2-14-26-6. This was about the same as last year in

Plenary: 3-13-25-7. Those voting YES with the US: Botswana, Liberia. Those voting NO: Comoros, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, G.Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, S.Africa, Sudan, Togo, Zimbabwe. Those abstaining: Angola, Benin, B. Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, CAR, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Eq. Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia. The remaining 6 AF delegations did not vote.

10.(SBU) Comment: These resolutions and the no action motions will appear before Plenary shortly and a few of these votes will change as Iran and some Islamic states press, and we and the Europeans press on the other side. Almost everyone understands that these are important votes: "why otherwise would a country work so hard to defeat the resolution" as one delegate remarked here. I am not sure that we will do better in the AF group than last year, but there is a chance of improving our score, and in any case, the results, both this year and last, show that when the radicals argue for observance of an "African consensus" against country-specific human rights resolutions, we have the voting sheets to demonstrate that no such consensus exists -- at least, so long as no African state is the subject of such a resolution.

11.(SBU) Meanwhile, as can be discerned, Botswana, Burundi and Liberia have been consistent supporters of the US position in these votes. Cape Verde voted with us on both no action motions, and Congo and Mauritius voted with us on one of them. We got most support on the DPRK, less on Burma, and least on Iran. Effective pressure against these resolutions varies, depending in great part on the Islamic presence, and countries need to be judged individually according to their situation. The magnetic pull of the radical tradition motivating, e.g., South Africa, also plays its role.

¶12. (C) And sometimes an absence is itself significant (e.g., the DRC, which last year voted for the Iran and Burma no action motions, deliberately did not participate this year -- a way of denying support to the no action motion without giving the radicals clear grounds to accuse the DRC Mission here of betrayal).

#### ANTI-ISRAELI RESOLUTIONS

¶13. (U) There is annually a plethora of anti-Israeli resolutions which pass the General Assembly by overwhelming margins. Three of these are sufficiently egregious to require a special effort, and we get some support in our opposition, if only in the form of abstentions. The three are:

-- The Resolution on the Committee on the exercise of

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the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People (a committee with 22 members: Senegal chairman; Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa members),

-- The Resolution on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, and

-- The Resolution on the Work of the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (a three-member committee of which Senegal is a member).

¶14. (U) The first two of these were adopted in Plenary in November, the Committee on the exercise, etc. by a vote of 107-8(US)-57 (the AF vote: 34-0-1-13 (last year 37-0-2-9)) and the Division for Palestinian Rights, etc. by a vote of 106-8(US)-57 (the AF vote: 33-0-1-14 (last year also 37-0-2-9)). All AF delegations voted for the resolutions, except for Cameroon which abstained, and Burundi, Chad, DRC, Eq. Guinea, Gambia, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Seychelles, S. Leone and Tanzania which were absent. Somalia voted for the first of these two and was absent in

the vote for the second.

15.(U) The Resolution on the Work of the Special Committee passed in December by a vote of 94-8(US)-73 (the AF vote was 30-0-6-12 (last year 31-0-5-12)). This resolution attracted considerably less support from AF delegations. In addition to Cameroon, other abstainers were Botswana, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Liberia. (Botswana, from Yes last year; Burundi and Liberia new this year; DRC and Eq. Guinea fell away.) Absent were B. Faso (from Yes last year), Cape Verde, Chad, DRC, Eq. Guinea, Gambia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, S. Leone, and Somalia.

16.(SBU) Since our goal is to reduce the votes in favor of these resolutions, the slight reduction in AF votes for the texts is a sign of some progress.

#### COMBATING DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS

17.(U) The Organization of the Islamic Conference sponsored a resolution on "Combating defamation of religions" which has been around in one form or another since at least 1999. It passed last year with 108 votes in favor and 51 (US) opposed. The resolution has historically been focussed on defamation of Islam. This year the OIC in negotiations broadened the focus somewhat, but we and others continue to have difficulties, in part on free speech grounds since the concept has provided the excuse in some countries for imprisonment and even worse abuses against individuals who have distributed "blasphemous" material or made comments "insulting religion." There were also legal questions, since in our view people have rights but religions do not.

18.(U) This year the vote in Third Committee was 85-50(US)-42. This represents a significant decline in support, not least among African delegations: the AF vote last year was 37-0-8; this year in Third Committee the AF vote was 25-0-15. AF delegations which abstained in Third Committee were Angola, Benin, Botswana, B. Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Eq. Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. Unfortunately, Nigeria went from an abstention last year to a YES this year. We continue to press the issue with selected AF delegations as the Plenary vote nears.

#### COMPLIANCE WITH NON-PROLIFERATION ...AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

19.(U) Triannually, the US sponsors a resolution in First (Disarmament) Committee on "Compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments." The resolution passes overwhelmingly, this year in Plenary with a vote of 158(US)-0-18. AF voted 38-0-2 and 8 marked absent. The two abstainers were Sudan and Zimbabwe.

20.(SBU) To add further weight to this resolution, we sought more co-sponsors. There were no AF co-sponsors in 2005. This year we gained four: Benin, Congo, Madagascar and Malawi. I had hoped for a somewhat larger number. The resolution was not controversial and it was an easy way to please the US,

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but four is better than none.

#### COMMENT

21.(SBU) The Africa Group at the UN is one of the five regional groups which are the organizing blocs of much of UN and General Assembly work. The Africa Group consists of the states covered in the Africa Bureau, plus the five states of the North African littoral. One result is that the positions of the Africa Group here are conditioned to no small degree by the views of these major players, Egypt especially. There is also the radical heritage of the anti-colonial struggle,

especially felt by such as South Africa and Namibia. There is the natural interest of the poor to benefit from the resources of the rich (which puts us at odds on budget issues, especially.) Finally, there is the tendency of the small and weak to hang together; the Africa Group has a reputation for solidarity. I believe that gradually these influences are dissipating, and the call to group solidarity less convincing -- at least when what are perceived as African interests are not directly threatened. So when we remember our diplomatic manners and the limits of the possible, we can often gain our objectives (or, more often, block those of our adversaries). But it takes one-on-one engagement in New York and in capitals. And the 48 AF constituents represent a formidable bloc, 25 percent of the membership.

22.(C) We have currently positioned ourselves less formally as critics of the UN. This is important, since for African countries the UN represents a natural ally -- and the GA forum in which they can assert their importance and control at least some of the decisions. While this admittedly is not always (or even often) to our advantage, it is important that we respect the pieties and voice our support of the institution when we can. And in doing so, I find considerable support and understanding among most of the Missions here, even if they are not able to provide votes on all the issues important to us.

23.(C) This year there was some slight improvement in AF on the anti-Israeli votes and in support of other US objectives (e.g., combating defamation of religions and the compliance resolution in First Committee). Unfortunately, there was at this point a bit of a falling back in dealing with the human rights texts. Still, we have, perhaps, made a little progress this year with the AF members. With continued focussed engagement, I believe we can make a bit more. All in all, and like many international conditions and institutions, the UNGA is not a problem to be "solved," but a situation to be managed. And African members and their diplomats are an inevitable (and often helpful) element in such management.

Khalilzad